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# Epistle of Love

AND

Tender Advice,

*F.L.*

*271.*

*Vol. I*

TO

## Friends and Brethren

IN

## AMERICA;

Or elsewhere;

To live in the Truth, that they may shew  
forth the Virtue and Effects of it in a  
Holy Life.

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*By your Friend and Brother in the Truth, who Travels  
for Sion's Prosperity,*

**William Bingley.**

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*1 Pet. 5. 3. Bring Ensamples to the Flock.*

*Ephes. 5. 1, 2. And Be ye therefore Followers of God, as dear  
Children, and walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us.*

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# TESTIMONY

## And wholesome Advice concerning MARRIAGE.

**M**arriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled, and it is Gods Ordinance, and is not to be forbidden, and whom God joins together no Man is to put asunder; and this is the Marriage that hath a Blessing, that minds Gods Joining, and Gods Ordinance; and the people of God were to practice it in all Ages, and the Faithful did observe and do it: As *Abraham*, the Father and Pattern of the Faithful, charged his chief Servant to go to his own People, and take a Wife for his Son *Isaac*; and said, the Lord God of Heaven and Earth shall send his Angel before thee; and his Servant (at Gods appointment) took *Rebekah*, and *Isaac* brought *Rebekah* to his Mothers Tent, and took her to Wife, *Gen. 24*. So here was Gods Ordinance and Gods Joining. And *Isaac* did not go contrary to God and his Fathers mind to take a Wife of the Daughters of *Canaan*, nor had a Priest to marry them; and *Isaac* was blessed of God, and he gave him *Jacob* and *Esau*: And *Esau* despised his Birth right, and married of the Daughters of the *Hittites*, which grieved his Father and his Mother, *Gen. 26. 35*. So *Esau* went from Gods Joining, and grieved his Parents, and *Rebekah* said to *Isaac*, if *Jacob* take a Wife of the Daughters of the Land, such as these be, what good will my Life do me? *Gen. 24. 46*.

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So

So here you may see the great care of *Rebekah* to preserve her Son from the Snare that *Esau* was come into, in this of Joining in Marriage with other People; and *Isaac* called his Son *Jacob* and charged him, and said, thou shalt not take a Wife of the Daughters of *Canaan*, but shalt go to thy Mothers Kindred, and God Almighty bless thee and prosper thee, *Gen. 28*. And *Jacob* obeyed his Father and his Mother; and the Lord appeared to him in his Journey and blessed him, and said I will greatly multiply thee, and will be with thee: And *Jacob* said if God will bless me and prosper me in the way that I go, and bring me to my Fathers house in Peace, then shall the Lord be my God, *vers. 21*. So here you may see *Jacob* minds the Lord, and obeyed his Parents in his choosing a Wife; and the Lord blessed him abundantly. And the Sons of *Jacob* could not suffer their Sister to marry with a Stranger though he was a great Prince. And the *Jews* which were the Offspring of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, were not to join in Marriage with other People; as it is written, thou shalt not take their Daughters to thy Sons, nor give thy Daughters to their Sons; for they will turn your Hearts from the Lord after other Gods, *Deut. 7. 3. Jos. 13. 12*. So here you may see, according to Gods Ordinance, there is a power in Parents in giving their Daughters in Marriage, and in taking Daughters to their Sons; they have a part in their Children to give and take in case of Marriage. And when the *Jews* did mix in Marriage with other People, they corrupted them, and drew them from God, and kindled his Anger against them, as you may see, *Numb. 25*. where the young men took the Daughters of *Moab*, which kindled Gods anger, and many of them died, and a great breach was made till *Phinehas* stood in the Gap, and stopped those proceedings, and turned away Gods Wrath; and these went from Gods Ordinance and from Gods Joining, and went from the good example of their Fathers, *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*,



*Jacob.* And you may see that *Solomon* a wise King, his taking of Strangers turned his Heart to worship Idols, for which the Lord rent the Kingdom from him, only left him a Lamp in *Israel* for *David* his Fathers sake : And you may see in all the Passages of the *Jews* revolting from God, for the most part, the chief reason was their matching in Marriage with other People, as in *Nehemiah* and *Ezra*, where you may see the *Jews* had taken Strangers of the Daughters of *Ashdod*, which grieved the Lord and his Servants *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*: So here you see they went from Gods Ordinance and Gods Joyning. And the Apostle saith to the Church, be not unequally yoked, a Believer with an Unbeliever, he accounts it as Light and Darkness, as Christ and Belial, as the Temple of God and Idols, 2 *Cor.* 6. for Believers in the Light of Christ Jesus are the Called of God, and the Seed of *Abraham*, and the Temple of God, and his Sons and Daughters, and are Heirs of the Promise in the New Covenant, and are *Jews* in Spirit, and have the Circumcision of the Spirit made without Hands, and are under the Law of the New Covenant which God hath written in their Hearts ; and such cannot Join to give or take in Marriage, with any Sect or sort of Persons or People that believe not in the Light of Christ Jesus, with which he hath enlightned every Man that comes into the World ; nor believe not in the Grace of God, but turn it into Wantonness ; nor in the Law of the New Covenant which is written in the Heart according to Gods Promise : And do not worship God in Spirit, but in some form, without the Power of God ; neither have received the Circumcision of the Spirit to circumcise their Hearts and Ears, such the Seed of *Abraham* must not Join with in Affinity of Marriage, nor take their Daughters to their Sons, nor give their Daughters to their Sons ; for you see it is contrary to Gods Ordinance, and contrary to the Spirit of *Abraham*,

*Isaac* and *Jacob*, which were great Fathers and Patterns; and all the true Believers in Christ Jesus are to follow their steps in the New Covenant, and will charge their Sons and Daughters that they joyn not in Marriage with any, but amongst their own People, that are Worshipers of God in Spirit, and Children of such Believers as be of Faith and Society with them, in the Worship and Service of God; and such Children as fear God, and are reverent and obedient to Parents, which all are obliged to by the Law of the first Covenant, and by the Law of Christ Jesus, and by the Doctrine of the Apostles; I say such Children will keep their Parents Charge as *Isaac* and *Jacob* did, and not grieve and vex their Parents as *Esau* did his Father and his Mother, in marrying with the Daughters of Strangers: for such Parents as are of *Isaac* and *Rebekah's* Spirit are much concerned in this Case, and cannot but grieve when their Children joyn in Marriage with such as are before mentioned, and give away their believing Parents part that they have in them, to the World; which makes Confusion, and grieves God's good Spirit, and smites their Parents with Grief, and such as smote Father and Mother in the time of the Law were to die, *Exod.* 21. 15. for Parents have a great Power and part in their Children, as in *Numb.* 30. 3, 4, 5. If a Daughter in her Fathers House unmarried make a Vow or Promise, her Father hath power to break it or establish it: and you may see, 1 *Sam.* 2. 3. & chap. old *Eli* did not use his Power to restrain his two Sons from their Wickedness, for which the Lord cut off the Arm of *Eli*, cut off his Family from the Priesthood; and Believers are a Royal Priesthood to offer to God spiritual Sacrifices. So they are to use their utmost Endeavours to restrain their Children from running into the World, which lies in Wickedness; or into their Fashions or Familiarity, which often doth great hurt, as *Jacob's* Daughter, in visiting the Daughters of the Land of *Canaan*,  
was



was defiled: So Friends are to be careful to watch over their Children, for their preservation from those things which Youth is prone to fall into to their great hurt; for we were but a few at the first when God called and chose us to be his People; and now there is a young Generation sprung up of young Men and Women, many of them sprung from the Loins of true Believers, and many of them runs into the Pride and Fashions of the World, and take Wives and Husbands of the World, and go to the Teachers of the World to be married; and so go from Gods Ordinance and Gods Joining: And men of the World see that Friends are a thriving People in their outward Substance, which makes them seek after Friends Children to marry with them: And some Friends, when their Rebellious Children have so done, (through Indulgence and Affection to their Children, more than the publick good) have given them Portions: And this encourageth the World to seek Friends Children in Marriage, and encourageth wanton Children to consent to them, by which means a breach is made upon our Youth, to the wounding and grieving the Spirits of the Faithful that are *Abrahams* Children, and are of the same mind with *Isaac* and *Rebekah*, and cannot give their Children in marriage to other People upon any account: But are willing to give their Children the same liberty as the Elders of *Israel* did to the Daughters of *Zelophehad*, who might marry to whom they pleased in their own Tribe. So Friends must use their godly endeavours, according to the utmost of their Power, to stop the gap of such proceedings that their Arm be not cut off as old *El's* was. And you may see before the Flood, when the Sons of God married with the Daughters of Men, how it grieved God. And is it not all one when Friends marry with other People, and some Friends Children are surprized and hurt and spoiled, their Parents allowing them to go into the Finery and Fashions of the World,  
and

and to visit and company with proud People, as *Jacob's* Daughter did with the Daughters of *Canaan*, by which opportunity she was ensnared. So Friends are to prevent such things to the utmost of their Power, and stop the breach that is made upon us by these things, that you may inherit *Phinehas's* Portion, an everlasting Priesthood in Christ our High-Priest, and the Covenant of Peace in Christ Jesus, in whom there is Peace, which is the desire of your true Friend. *W. E.*

*Wm. Edmundson?*

*The foregoing Paper was read in the Men and Womens Meetings, being assembled together in a weighty Sence of Truth, and Friends having good Unity with it, have added thereto the following Testimony.*

*Dear Friends every where in this Nation, and elsewhere,*

**W**E being met together in the Name and Fear of the Lord, and his Presence and Power being with us; it was represented by several Friends, and that under a weight and burden of Spirit, that of late great hurt hath happened among Friends, through several young People going to the Priest to be married, and taking Husbands and Wives among the World, which hath been sometimes occasioned through too much Indulgence of Parents towards their Children, and sometimes through the stubbornness of Children towards their Parents, and not hearkning to their Counsel.

*Now Friends,* the Lord having established it as a Principle, that those that profess his everlasting Truth, should neither go to a Priest to be married, nor take Husbands or Wives from among the World, that are not of us; it fell weighty upon Friends to consider of some way according to the Truth, as much as in them lay, to endeavour to prevent such Practices for the future: And in order thereunto, after a serious debate and several weighty Testimonies in that case (both of  
Men



Men and Women) Friends concluded on the following Advice and Counsel; desiring that Friends in their respective places and stations will in diligence put it in practice.

First, *That all Parents, both Men and Women, take care to educate their Children in the awe and fear of the Lord, according to the Principles of the blessed Truth, taking care to restrain them from such Company and Acquaintance that may allure them from the way of Truth, into the Vanity of the World; and likewise to restrain them in any other things that may have a tendency to draw their Minds from the fear of the Lord, and from the sense of his blessed Truth: That so through the sense of the Truth in themselves, it may so ballance their natural Affections, that they may rightly see the states and conditions of their Children, as to give that wholesome Advice and Counsel that may answer the Witness of God in them.*

Secondly, *If any Friends do perceive that their Children are under such a Temptation, as to go to a Priest to be married, or to take one of the World to Husband or Wife; if they will not hear that counsel and advice, which in the fear of the Lord they give them; then let them inform Friends, that they may deal with them in the order of the Gospel, that so, if possible, they may be preserved out of the snare, or the greater weight of Judgment may be laid on them by their Parents in particular, and Friends in general.*

Thirdly, *If notwithstanding the advice and counsel of Parents and Friends, any young People do fall into the aforementioned evils; we desire and advise all Parents to keep very strictly to the principle of Truth in themselves, in their conduct towards their Children, which we believe will restrain them from passing by that act of great Disobedience unto themselves in particular, and the Lord and his Truth in general, until such time that Friends, through their true Repentance receive them into Unity again: And further, we believe that it will best answer the Truth, for Parents to withhold giving such disobedient Children any outward*

ward Portion, until such time they be reconciled to Truth and Friends as aforesaid; for the withholding that may be instrumental to cause them to enter into a consideration of their Disobedience to the Lord and their Parents, from whence true Repentance may spring, and not only so, but it may be an occasion to prevent others from falling into the same Snare, and may put a stop to some of the World in seeking after our Children on that account.

Fourthly, We do desire that Friends in every place will have such a watchful Eye over one another in the fear of the Lord, that if they see any Parents negligent in their duty, by too much indulging their Children in those things that Truth doth not allow, that they admonish them of it in the Love of God, and Sence of Truth, that so things may be kept well amongst us.

Fifthly, As in the weighty Sence of the blessed Truth we have given our advice and counsel in this particular. So in the same Sence we advise and counsel Friends in the general, that in all things they walk as becometh the Gospel, taking heed that in no respect they give way to any liberty which the Truth doth not allow of; for that is so far from the true Christian liberty that it hath a tendency to imbondage the Soul again, as the Apostle said, Hold fast the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made you Free, and be no more entangled with the Yoak of Bondage. And as the Lord hath set Limits and Bounds in his Truth, our preservation doth consist in keeping within the bounds of it; in which we may expect the Blessings and Mercies of the Lord to rest upon us, and to be multiplied unto us and our Children, to the Praise of his Name for ever.

Given forth at the National Men and Womens Meetings,  
Assembled together in Dublin the 10th day of the Third  
Month, 1680.

Signed in behalf of the said Meetings, By Alexander Seton,

THE END.



AN  
EPISTLE  
FOR  
True Love, Unity  
AND  
ORDER  
IN THE  
Church of Christ.

Against the Spirit of Discord, Disorder  
and Confusion, &c.

Recommended to Friends in Truth, chiefly for the sake of the  
Weak and Unstable Minded, for Information and Encouragement  
in our *Christian Unity and Society*, held in the Spirit of Christ, both  
in Faith and Practice.

By Two Servants of the Church, according to our Measures,  
Anne Whitehead, Mary Elson.

But God hath tempered the Body together—that there should be NO  
SCHISME in the Body, but that the Members should have the SAME  
CARE one for another, 1 Cor. 12.

L O N D O N :

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Lane, near Shoreditch.

own Wills, advancing themselves  
at their knowledge or Conscience, and  
knows well enough, that if they  
their Security must fail, and how many Wid-  
dows and Orphans, Old and Young, are there oppressed  
and wronged by these things? Doth not such think  
and believe that the Wrath, Power, and Cry of these  
will bring down Vengeance upon the Unrighteous God?  
or think they not, that God will do these things  
for his precious Truth and Name sake, and for the  
Cry of the Oppressed? yea, assuredly he will plead their  
Cause, and will disburthen and clear his Truth and  
People of them & their unrighteous Deeds together.

Is it not our duty, both Old and Young, to set our  
Affairs in such a posture, as that we may be out of  
danger that any Body should suffer by us, while we in  
the mean time, only aim at our own profit & advantage.  
Oh, let the Truth here be judge, and then I know the  
Elder Friends will labour to quit themselves in this  
matter, and so have power to put a stop and bridle to  
such young Ones as takes this course, or else the peril  
and reproach of both will lie at their Door in a great  
measure. Oh! that a holy Zeal may increase in ma-  
ny Hearts for the removing of this great Evil, and let  
go the eager desire of great profit; and every one to  
be content with his own, and serve the Lord and his  
Truth therewith according to his Ability. (and if he  
please, he will increase it) And take care of the youn-  
ger sort, and become good Examples to them in this  
matter, that the stink of offences in this kind may be  
stopped, and the Truth of God may prosper and flow-  
rish more and more, Amen.

Colchester the 29th of  
the 9th Mon. 1677.

Geertruyd Derik Niesen.

R



